

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01

DODE-00 /021 W

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R 301055Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO COMSIXTHFLT

INFO CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

SECSTATE WASHDC 8089

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0617

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL TS

SUBJECT: BILATERAL EXERCISES WITH TUNISIAN NAVY

REF: COMSIXTHFLT 201239Z JAN 75 (NOTAL)

1. WISH CONFIRM OUR UNDERSTANDING OF RESULTS DISCUSSIONS THAT TOOK PLACE HERE DURING RECENT COMSIXTHFLT VISIT RE BILATERAL EXERCISES WITH TUNISIAN NAVY ONCE SHIP PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IS AGAIN OPERATIONAL.

2. EMBASSY SUPPORTS IDEA OF TRAINING ASSIST FOR BOURGUIBA COMPRISING A FEW NAVAL PERSONNEL SERVING LIMITED PERIODS ABOARD BOURGUIBA AT SEA. CONCEPT WILL REQUIRE FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH TUNISIANS WHICH WE PREPARED UNDERTAKE WHEN BOURGUIBA IS OPERATIONAL. COMSIXTHFLT MAY WISH CONSIDER EMBARKING FEW TUNISIAN PERSONNEL FOR SAME PERIODS FOR PURPOSES FAMILIARIZATION WITH US NAVY ROUTINE AT SEA AS EXCHANGE GESTURE. LANGUAGE MAY BE PROBLEM. AT LEAST ONE MEMBER AND HOPEFULLY MORE OF TEAM SHOULD SPEAK SUFFICIENT FRENCH TO GET ALONG WHILE SHIP IS AT SEA.

3. EMBASSY HAS ALREADY INDICATED ITS SUPPORT FOR JOINT OPERATIONS AT SEA INVOLVING BOURGUIBA AND SIXTH FLEET DESTROYER. SEE NO OBJECTION TO ONE US NAVY OFFICER
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ABOARD BOURGUIBA FOR SUCH AN EXERCISE. THIS TOO,

HOWEVER, WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL CONSULTATION WITH TUNISIANS WHICH WE ALSO PREPARED UNDERTAKE WHEN BOURGUIBA IS OPERATIONAL UNLESS WASHINGTON AGENCIES OBJECT.

4. COMSIXTHFLT RECOMMENDATION OF PERIODIC THREE WEEK VISIT OF SIXTH FLEET DESTROYER TO BIZERTE FOR JOINT LOCAL OPERATIONS, INPORT TRAINING AND ASSISTS WAS NOT DISCUSSED. WHILE WE NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHAT WOULD BE INVOLVED, SUGGESTION WOULD APPEAR TO US TO GO BEYOND WHAT WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE DOING AT THIS STAGE. AMBASSADOR DID AGREE, HOWEVER, TO REQUEST TUNISIAN APPROVAL FOR THREE ADDITIONAL PORT VISITS PER YEAR, MAKING TOTAL OF 15 ANNUAL VISITS.

5. SIMILARLY, THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATION OF THREE WEEK VISIT BY USS GRAHAM COUNTY AND TWO PG'S TO BIZERTE FOR SAME PURPOSE. NONETHELESS OUR REACTION TO THIS PROPOSAL IS SAME AS IN PENULTIMATE SENTENCE PARA 4 ABOVE.

6. EMBASSY CONTINUES WELCOME SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING READINESS OF BOURGUIBA, BUT ALSO CONTINUES BELIEVE WE SHOULD TAKE MATTER STEP AT A TIME, NOT GOING ANY FASTER THAN TUNISIANS CAN ABSORB OR CAN LIVE WITH. SEELYE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBINED MILITARY EXERCISES, NAVAL EXERCISES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TUNIS00617
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750034-0468
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975015/aaaaadzu.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 COMSIXTHFLT 201239Z, 75 JAN 75
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BILATERAL EXERCISES WITH TUNISIAN NAVY
TAGS: MPOL, TS, US
To: COMSIXTHFLT
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006